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ABSTRACT

In an address to local, state, regional, and national groups involved with child care, characteristics of some of the programs are explained in an effort to develop a broad based national coalition for a system of universally available child care. Head Start, Title IV-A of the Social Security Act (amended) day care, and church-related day care programs are described. A statement of principles of the Day Care and Child Development Council of America toward the goal of locally controlled, publicly supported, universally available child care systems is presented, along with actions of the National Parent Federation regarding legislation for these kinds of services. The importance of parent and staff cooperation is stressed in order to achieve an adequate child care program, which is an economic issue, an innovative approach to correcting old social weaknesses, and a political issue. (LH)

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Position Paper On

The National Parents for Day Care
and Child Development

First Annual Convention - April 28-30, 1972

NEW FORCES SHAPING CHILD CARE

Introduction

The significance of gold has never been its value as a metal, but the necessary labor time involved to process it. One could make the same point with respect to diamonds or to any raw materials on whose potential the human race places great value.

The concept of child care, child development or day care, it has been said, is an idea whose time has come, from the early war years to the present. But, objective forces and conditions - wars, depressions and the like - rather than individuals have always, so far, shaped the course of social phenomena. In the last three years, however, numerous local, state, regional, and national conferences have brought many groups to the conference table to talk about the issue of child care. It is our thinking at the Day Care and Child Development Council of America, Inc., that it is important to address ourselves to these groups and individuals in an attempt to explain some of their characteristics and develop an understanding of them that can lead to the growth of a broad based coalition in our country for a system of universally available child care.

An Overview

First and foremost among such groups, though not necessarily in order of priority, I would like to treat Head Start. Funded originally out of OEO and coming on the heels of a great social movement in this country, Head Start carried with it many of the innovative and progressive ideas of its time. Recognizing the need to get funds and services to an oppressed and powerless group of lower income whites, blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Chicanos, a system was devised which by-passed the state bureaucracies, and went via regional offices to local sponsoring agencies of various descriptions. In most cases, these local units were community action agencies, though there were many exceptions to this rule.

Many of the former NAACP, CORE, student activists, and recent college graduates, became the professional and technical assistance leadership core. Based upon the "maximum feasible participation of the poor" clause of the OEO Act and the subsequent guidelines that stemmed from the Act, another force entered the Head Start picture. It was comprised of parents, past and existing welfare mothers and fathers, high school and college drop outs, two year college graduates, and others. This then became the work pool from which human resources were drawn to maintain that new institution. Language patterns, styles, habits, etc., culminated in an historically evolved force of people.

Simultaneously, there was a developing and sometimes inter-connected activity commonly described as Title IV-A day care. Based on the aggressive

Tilte IV-A section of the Social Security Act as amended, which provides funds for states on the basis of a 3-1 match, these monies enable units to provide a variety of services. Further, it organizes the same constituency as Head Start: AFDC parents and their children.

What is noteworthy here is that these two pieces of legislation provide federally supported programs for children of only the poor and very poor. The near poor, one-parent families and upwardly mobile, committed middle Americans, who are providing leadership in many cases for both of these acts, are denied participation as recipients, although they benefit rather limitedly as professionals and staff providing services.

There are also the part or full day church-related day care groups which are relatively unorganized as a consolidated force. (Lastly,) there are the private day care operations which comprise the largest single providers of child care programs in the United States. This unit, too, has remained basically unorganized and somewhat under attack, viewed with a great deal of suspicion as to its motives. This is particularly true too of the "grand ladies" of child care. There are also within the framework of these large groups or forces, child care units identified by class and ethnic characteristics, and which tend to respond and operate from these designations.

THE PRINCIPLES AND SUPPORTIVE POSITION OF DCCDCA

statement of principles

The Day Care and Child Development Council of America believes that quality child care services are a right:

- of every child
- of every parent
- of every community.

The goal of the Day Care and Child Development Council of America is to promote the development of a locally controlled, publicly supported, universally available child care system through:

PUBLIC EDUCATION—to mobilize public opinion and resources in support of children's programs.

SOCIAL ACTION—to assist in formulating public policies which will result in well-planned, adequately funded, and well administered programs responsive to local needs and aspirations.

ASSISTANCE TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES—to help citizen action groups and service agencies in meeting their community needs.

Society is obligated to support the realization of human potential. Child care services are a fundamental right for:

THE CHILD—they provide children with opportunities to develop their full capacity as human beings during their crucial early years.

THE FAMILY—they provide parents with real choices about employment and other activities outside the home.

THE COMMUNITY—they provide one of the essential elements for improving the quality of life of the community.

WE BELIEVE that America needs a coordinated network of child care and development services which

- are available to children of all ages from conception through youth, to families from every kind of economic and social background and to every community, with priority to those whose need is greatest.
- are available through a wide variety of different types of programs and during all of the hours of the day and time of the year that children, families and communities need them.
- have the full range of components required to promote the intellectual, emotional, social and physical growth of the children they serve.
- insure parents a decisive policy role in the planning, operation and evaluation of programs which determine the environment in which their children live.
- place the major responsibility for planning and operating child care and development services at the local level.
- reflect and build on the culture and language of children, families and communities being served and enhance the distinctive features of the child's culture.

WE BELIEVE that child care services should be publicly supported. The financing of quality child care services is a costly undertaking but the most prudent of long-term investments. The Nation's priorities must be reordered to provide the resources necessary for universal services.

WE BELIEVE that child care services should be a public, social utility whose cost must be shared by the entire community much as we now pay for essential police, fire and public school services.

In support of the before stated advocacy position (p.4), in the last two years, DCCDCA has spent some extensive staff hours, particularly on the part of the Executive Director, in speaking engagements, conferences and workshops in Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Kentucky, California, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, North Carolina, and Massachusetts.

In addition to feeding information to the above areas of day care activity, we have been in quest of retrieval of information, examination and analysis of the groups we have been working with. In July, 1971, DCCDCA held a conference in Washington dealing with delivery services. Significant information was retrieved from this session on the potential for a comprehensive child care legislative process.

In February, 1972, DCCDCA conducted a National Child Development Action Conference. It is interesting to note that the 1200-1400 delegates of the conference, almost without exception, comprised the most active groups and individuals working for a system of universal child care in the country. They were advocates, directors of programs, parents, 4-C groups, ad hoc consortiums, state and regional offices in charge of various aspects of child care programmatics, community control forces, labor groups, women's groups, model cities, etc. Sharp note should be taken of the broad nature of resolutions introduced and passed at this conference.

Thus, it was no accident that the Council was approached for assistance and backup to the National Parent Federation Convention; and secondly, that we were asked to provide my services as convention chairman.

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National Parent Federation Convention

The National Parent Federation, having participated in the DCCDCA July, 1971, Delivery Services Conference, became aware of parents' roles as related to legislation. As a result, it moved to continue to keep its parent constituency aware of the evolving events in the legislative move for a comprehensive child care bill. Secondly, inspired by the need for continued involvement of parents in this most vital area, the Federation moved to call its own legislative conference in September, 1971. This conference focused on the role of parents in shaping child care legislation; its 200 attendance was broadly middle and lower economic groups, encompassing basically whites and Blacks.

In addition to conducting business related to the legislative process and proceedings, this group agreed that the National Parent Federation needed to call its first annual convention in April, 1972. November saw an Interim Board of Directors meeting, at which time plans were laid for this conference.

In December, 1971, the Comprehensive Child Care bill, having successfully passed both congressional houses, was vetoed by Nixon. Responding to the call, the National Parent Federation moved waves of letters to the White House and to DCCDCA. They demanded that DCCDCA initiate the thrust for a response action conference which would bring the critical situation to the attention of child care advocates. With NPF taking on the responsibility of the major aspect of mobilization of

parents and the planning of parent participation at the conference, DCCDCA moved to sponsor the national action conference which emerged on February 5-7, 1972. It saw a parent participation level of 500, directed and led by the National Parent Federation which emerged from the conference as the key action force calling for defeat of the H.R.1 legislation.

Immediately following the national action conference, the National Welfare Rights Organization moved on mobilization of forces for the Children's March for Survival in Washington. Seeking out the President of the National Parents Federation, the Executive Director of NWRO called for immediate support from this grassroots force. Responding again to what they knew was a key step toward the development of forces to struggle for a universal child care system in this country, NPF mobilized 10-20% of the (conservatively estimated) 50,000 participants in the March 25th Children's March.

With a federal grant from the Office of Child Development, the Center for Community Change, Washington, D.C., was moving in January to sponsor regional conferences to deal with the newly drafted federal licensing codes. National Parent Federation was requested to assist in the identification and mobilization of contacts for these conferences. NPF was responsible for the involvement of key parent units in several regions.

The National Association for the Development of Community Development (NACD), recognizing the pressing nature of child care as it was linked into the continuity of the OEO Act, moved to include in its April 23-27 National Conference a workshop dealing with Head Start and child development. The National Parents Federation, concerned that this

unit would not approach the nature of the situation and its needs from the perspective of parents, moved to make contact with key support units that would be participating and could advocate the child care issue properly. As such, NPF, in the forefront of the development of a conference resolution demanded the defeat of H.R.1.

During all these activities, the parents continued to work on their own national convention, and following the Children's March, were back into full force operation, planning for their April 28-30 event. Having whetted their teeth on so many experiences, they were well equipped for the effort. We would venture to state that a convention of this nature is the first to be convened by a full, front led, national grassroots unit relating itself to the relevant issues of the day.

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What is the significance of all of this unprecedented and unreported activity for child care? How does one analyze and prepare the next steps based on proper assessment?

Earlier we mentioned a relegation of child care to lower income Americans, and the shutting out of upper class Americans, which should have meant automatically that the issues would be narrow. However, remember the high rate of unemployed teachers across the country and the multiplicity of small businesses and industries which depend upon the commodities and services of child care, including the various levels of employment that presently service child care (from regional offices to federal program units to state and local bodies of all descriptions). And remember the educational institutions developing early childhood

education and child care courses. So you see that it all shapes up to a rather distinctive set of forces which are, have been, and will depend upon a system of child care in this country.

The NPF convention produced a participation level of approximately 1500 people from 33 states, 80% of whom were minorities. Thus, one would have thought that the ethnic question, as in the past, would have been the hardest question to resolve. Instead, the question became the relationship between parents, paid staff, and other professionals in child care programs. While on the surface, many delegates, both parents and staff, saw as the problem that the parents were too difficult to ~~organisate~~ organize and mobilize as a significant unit, obviously this was not the case. For it was the parents who called the convention which they were attending: laid out the agenda, set the tone, organized all parents, staff, professionals, etc. The professional staff provided the resources and backup for all workshops, technical aspects of the convention, etc. Staff, on the other hand (or some sections of the professionals present at the convention) was particularly disturbed at the insistence of the parents on incisive control of their programs. Some staff argued that parents' history of involvement in the programs has been limited despite major attempts to involve them. Others argued that parents lack the ability and know-how to set policies on curriculum, to know classrrom scenes, handle effective programs, etc.

BUT LET US TAKE A LOOK AT THE FACTS!

Parents

The innovative, proper introduction of parent involvement in child care programs, as well as we can assess to any major extent, was begun in Head Start. Parent involvement was directly written at federal, state, and regional levels of Head Start guidelines. Yes, we agree that parent involvement or control, whichever you prefer, has not worked! But, its failure is not because it is not a good thing or cannot work; it has not worked simply because we have not really tried it! In areas where parents, staff, and community have made a conscious effort to train and develop parents at the policy making level, it has worked wonders for parents, child, staff, community (and nation).

It is common knowledge that child care at the federal and state levels has undergone some Marked shifts in emphasis. With the change of administration, so went the change of emphasis throughout all administrative levels of government. All departments, including the regional offices, are preparing for custodial child care. This has been manifested in every bill, with the exception of the Mondale and Brademas Bills. Parent involvement, though never fully carried out, for a variety of reasons, is now being played down and all our nation is being told it cannot work. Even the parents are being told this.

At the time when parent involvement was called for by law and guidelines, parents' roles were being usurped, misunderstood or left untried by some unscrupulous program operations. Many of the regional and federal offices connected with child care and other related services were hiring a wave of young, well-meaning, recently graduated students. In many cases, the criteria for hiring were based upon degrees and no experience. The bulk of the staff people really working at parent and community control were fired for that very reason. State welfare systems who theoretically administered Title IV-A child care, did not agree with it, and almost 99 9/10% of the offices across the country have never even tried it.

So, the dispute between staff and parents over matters of competence is superficial and is a cross that neither of them actually should bear. Staff and parent differences are secondary. The real issue is that the administration has never advocated or appropriated funds for a system of child care based upon needs of children and their parents. While appropriations for training and development of parents and community were vast, they were in part basically rip offs and in part a process of learning new ways and approaches to training that should have been expected to take time, ~~trail~~ trial and error.

Staff and Professionals

Staff and professionals are suffering from the identical problems mentioned above in relationship to parents and staff, with very few exceptions, in that staff has never fully understood the significance of

parents as their reserve force. They do not understand that it was only they, as staff and professionals, who could have brought to the parents, on the parents' level, the importance of their involvement. It is the role of the staff and professionals to assist in the articulation of new developments in child care on the state and federal levels. It is their responsibility to provide the kind of atmosphere in parent meetings for learning and development. In the real ~~pratical~~ practical sense, this approach should have been supported by all houses of government and a new course charted in child rearing practices and institution building. But staff and professionals have been ostracized and criticized from both ends of the spectrum. They caught hell from the federal, state, and regional administration, parents and local Boards of Education for stepping on their turf; yet in many cases they had been teaching and developing children for eight, ten, fifteen years and had no ~~peice~~ piece of paper to show for this vast store of knowledge.

It is not parents, professionals, or staff that should bear the brunt of the inadequacies of child care! It is not staff, parents, or professionals that should be fighting with each other! It is the staff, parents, and professionals that should be demanding a system of universally available child care with appropriations and resources to carry out the system. Then and only then will the secondary disputes be erased!

Conclusions

The National Parent Federation Convention was a pronounced demonstration of the fact that child care has completely cut across ethnic and class lines, and that the issue to be fought out is one of child care for all. We must then place this most vital issue in perspective.

A. Child Care as an Economic Need

Statistics show that there are 5 million children below the age of six that need care as opposed to 700,000 who are actually receiving services.

It is a known fact that a child care program serving 60 children is capable of providing employment for approximately 10-20 persons of professional and non-professional background. There exist within our communities students, unskilled, one parent families, ghetto and middle class addicts, people who are disenfranchised and have not found a means of becoming productive, contributing members of our society. These are people who know the community and their own lives, thus making them one of the richest sources from which to draw the child care work force. Yes, child care work force! These are or will be our own children, so there is no need for raised eyebrows and questions as to their "credibility" to teach youngsters from their own communities.

There exist large numbers of unemployed skilled, professional teachers (B.S., B.A., etc.) and they are the forces that we could draw upon to become the trainers and professionals for that child care work force.

On an indirect basis there are massive avenues for employment in the multiplicity of child care services: transportation (buses, etc.), auto parts, the food and paper industry, toy manufacturers, educational instititutions providing child care courses, consultants from firms and as individuals. In essence, we are talking about pump primping and breathing new life into antiquated services and educational institutions.

B. Child Care as a New Innovative Approach to Correcting Old Social Weaknesses

There is hardly any aspect of our times that we are not forced to re-examine and correct from our past experiences in medicine, science, technology, etc., except social development. There is hardly an American or particular minority of any description who does not want to see an end to racism and prejudice. This can only be done to the extent that we understand their origins and know that we can educate our young to understand that these are residues of the past.

We must do this consciously and with deliberate intent and we must provide the resources and technical support for it. Early childhood education provides these for our use.

C. Early Childhood as an Election Issue

There are only two issues (in this writer's humble opinion) in this presidential campaign: one is war, the other is peace. Very few people today are stupid about the war, despite the fact that the present administration thinks so. We know our nation has been operating on a war economy for several years, and is trapped by it. It has been profitable for certain sections of the population to continue that war economy. However, it takes no student of political science to recognize that undeveloped countries are sadly lacking for goods and materials that our people have the wherewithall to produce. In almost every field, honest trade can be developed that can benefit our people, our economy and those of other countries - specifically in early childhood education.

Child Care forces must carry the child care issue to the fore in this election. It must be understood that the reason for child care is not just children; that it becomes political because decisions have to be made as to whether or not we have to have a comprehensive child care system, and if so, what priorities it shall be given in terms of appropriations. Child care forces must stop simply accepting sympathetic candidates and begin to run themselves, forcing all presidential candidates and their parties to adopt child care as the number one issue in this country. Teachers, staff, parents, professionals, and consultants, alike, must understand this thoroughly. Putting child care on the national agenda is going to demand that ~~enadidates~~ candidates running locally as well as nationally deal with child care as an issue.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

1. Child Care as an Economic Need

Architects, food handlers, unions, industries, etc., and related child care services need to be brought to the table and told how child care relates to their growth and that of the nation's economy.

2. Child Care as a New, Innovative Approach to Correcting Old Social Weaknesses

Staff and professionals of child care need to be brought to the table immediately for consolidation and organization of their unit, so that they then become a permanent structure to be dealt with in the struggle for child care in this country.

3. Child Care as an Election Issue

All concerned child care advocates, parents, and staff and professionals must move in their own areas to all those local candidates vying for office and raise child care as an issue that they see as key for their elected officials to deal with.

A history needs to be done of the candidates' stand on the child care bills in Congress. Have they introduced or supported other child care bills? What role have they played in assisting the allocation of state, local, or national funds for child care? These records need to be public knowledge. The National Parent Federation Board of Directors needs

to move for meetings with all presidential candidates and establish the issues of child care.

Members of the National Parent Federation need to establish in their local, state, and regional areas speaking engagements with child care programs in order to project the need for universally available comprehensive child care and the related roles of parents. They need to move to foundations in their local, state, and national areas to seek funds for the support of their parent efforts.

It is common knowledge that the present administrative position on child care is not acceptable to children, parents, staff, and professionals. When these groups accept that their problems - internal and external - can ~~ably~~ only be solved by a new national agenda, and that the creation and success of that agenda is up to them, then they will surely set aside their transient difficulties and come together to do what must be done in 1972.

MAKE 1972 THE YEAR OF THE CHILD